



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES
Maryland's Social Services Agency



MEDIA RELEASE

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**DHR USHERS IN NATIONAL ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH BY
APPLAUDING FAMILIES FROM THE WESTERN MARYLAND AREA**

Allegany, Frederick, Garrett and Washington Counties name families of the year

BALTIMORE – The Maryland Department of Human Resources (DHR) got a head start on celebrating National Adoption Awareness month by honoring families from **Allegany, Frederick, Garrett and Washington Counties** that contributed to the **770 total adoptions** finalized during fiscal year 2009.

“We have much to celebrate,” said DHR Secretary Brenda Donald. We have seen a 15 percent reduction in the overall number of children in foster care; a 43 percent decline in group home placements; we have recruited 1,500 new foster parents since 2007; and we found families for 770 children during our last fiscal year.”

The successes Donald highlighted were driven by the Department’s **Place Matters** initiative. This initiative builds on the premise that nothing matters more to a child than a place to call home.

Each of the local departments of social services honored families from their jurisdiction that adopted during the last year. These families were recognized for their commitment to adoption, their support of the agency’s goals, and their efforts to produce the best possible outcomes for children. Western Maryland jurisdictions honored the following families:

Allegany County Department of Social Services recognized **Eugene and Jeanne Miller**

The Millers have cared for approximately 30 children of all ages since 2000. They have provided transitional care for young children returning to their birth families as well as assistance to young adults transitioning to independence. This past year, they adopted a teenager and are committed to adopting two more children currently in their care. The Millers clearly exemplify child-focused advocacy.

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Frederick County Department of Social Services recognized **Maureen and Douglass Garlock.**

Mr. and Mrs. Garlock have been foster parents since 2005. They also have two biological children. Initially, they requested a healthy female child under the age of two years. At the time, they weren't considering a child with any cognitive or physical limitations. In 2007, they took in Rayna who was two months old at the time. She was a high-risk placement – her permanency plan was reunification. But in 2008, they wound up adopting her when reunification was not successful. The Garlocks have provided a safe, loving home for Rayna, who they lovingly call Raylee. She is a happy well-adjusted child who has found her forever home with her new family.

Garrett County Department of Social Services recognized **Barbara and Danny Baker.**

Barbara and Danny Baker adopted their foster daughter, Nicole on August 25, 2008. The Baker's have dedicated much time and effort into providing a stable, nurturing and learning environment for Nicole. They have been professional in their interactions with all parties involved through the foster care and adoption process. They are a valuable resource to both the department and the children of Garrett County.

Washington County Department of Social Services recognized **Toni and Tom Barnhart.**

The Barnharts have been licensed foster parents since 2005. They raised three biological children and have adopted two young children. Over the years, they have accepted children of all ages and races into their home, including teenagers and sibling groups. Toni is active in the local foster parent association and she has been on the Pride Training Panel for over a year. Toni and Tom work very well with birth families and are very involved in their foster children's lives. They are always willing to attend family involvement meetings. They are a shining example of how a foster family can positively impact the lives of children and their birth families.

The celebration for the families was held at the Baltimore Zoo's Mansion House. In addition to an awards luncheon for their contributions, the families were also treated to an afternoon at the zoo with their children. "This is our 13th year of celebrating adoptions with an awards luncheon, but our families will tell you the biggest reward for them was being able to add these wonderful children to their families," Donald stated.

Additional information about this year's honorees can be found by visiting the DHR newsroom at www.dhr.state.md.us and clicking on the "Newsroom" tab on the left side of the page.

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The 2009 Families of the Year from jurisdictions across the state include:

Allegany County	Eugene and Jeanne Miller
Anne Arundel County	Mark and Lisa Walinski
Baltimore City	Donald and Arnissa Ames Brandi Beckner Jim and Julia Forest Avan Howard Mark and Judy Schlothauer
Baltimore County	Jason and Donna Neidinger
Calvert County	Jerry-y and Mary Lee
Caroline County	Ron and Vicky Marquess
Carroll County	Marshall and Chrissie Thompson
Cecil County	Rick and Marianne Shull
Charles County	Lionel and Shelia Carroll
Dorchester County	Joseph and Glenda Smith
Frederick County	Douglas and Maureen Garlock
Garrett County	Danny and Barbara Baker
Harford County	Robert and Yvonne Cossey
Howard County	Deirdre Henderson
Montgomery County	Charlie and Jenni Weller
Prince George's County	Darla Sligh
Queen Anne's County	Mark and Darla Verdonck
St. Mary's County	Gary and Vickie Ferko
Somerset County	Jonathan and Cherry Conley
Talbot County	Deborah Fletcher
Washington County	Tom and Toni Barnhart
Wicomico County	Scott and Amy Ness
Worcester County	Augustine Cook

The Maryland Department of Human Resources is the state's social service provider. The agency collaborates with 24 local jurisdictions to: provide foster care, adoption and protective services to children; collect and distribute child support payments; and provide temporary cash, food stamps and medical

- Martin O'Malley, Governor
- Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor
- Brenda Donald, Secretary

assistance to families. It also funds programs for homeless persons, refugees, migrant workers, victims of crime and women who are displaced, battered or assaulted. Last year, DHR served 638,000 people in need. In terms of its annual budget, DHR is Maryland's fourth largest state agency.